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BPA evaluates new wind power development

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Bonneville Power Administration

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PORTLAND, Ore. - The Bonneville Power Administration and SeaWest WindPower Inc. signed a pre-development agreement for the 24-megawatt Condon Wind Project July 17. BPA is considering a 20-year power purchase agreement for the project's output. The predevelopment agreement describes how SeaWest and BPA will cooperate while BPA conducts an environmental impact statement (EIS).

The Condon Wind Project would be located on private land in Gilliam County, Ore., near the town of Condon. This is one of several new sites that SeaWest believes hold great promise. SeaWest and BPA are interested in pioneering the Condon site to see if it is a dependable source of wind power. BPA could add the Condon project's output to its portfolio of Environmentally Preferred Power, which is in high demand from regional utilities. BPA currently has 33.9 MW of wind power in its environmentally preferred power portfolio.

Initial reactions to the project have been very positive. "As co-chair of the U.S. Congressional Renewable Energy Caucus in the House of Representatives, I am very supportive of efforts to harness the wind to provide energy for our communities. With high energy prices nationwide this summer, it's more important than ever for us to take advantage of alternative sources of power," said Congressman Greg Walden (R-Ore.).

Nancy Hirsh, policy director for the NW Energy Coalition, said, "We are pleased to see that wind power is becoming part of BPA's vision for the future. This is one of a series of new wind farms backed by BPA."

As the first step in conducting the EIS, BPA will set a 30-day scoping period during which affected landowners, concerned citizens, special interest groups, local governments and other interested parties can comment on the scope of the EIS. SeaWest will work closely with the local community regarding any concerns about the environmental effects of the development.

If the project passes environmental muster, 600- or 950-kilowatt turbines could be spaced across the relatively flat plateau currently used for winter wheat farming and cattle grazing. The project would not interfere with either activity.

SeaWest is the largest independent developer of utility-scale wind power projects in the world and has developed sites in Wyoming, California, the United Kingdom and Spain. The Condon project is the first of what the company hopes will be between 300 and 500 MW of renewable projects in the Pacific Northwest.

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